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AN EPISTLE TO *FRIENDS*,

Given forth from Leinſter-Province Meeting in *Ireland*, held at Caſtledermot the 9th. 10th. and 11th. days of the 7th. Month 1698.

Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World: If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him, 1 John 1 Chap. 15. verſ.

Printed in the Year 1699

AN

EPISTLE

TO

PALEMON.

The [redacted] Preface

Dear Friends,

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE

THE following Epiſtle is recommended to be read, in the fear of the Lord, in which I doubt not but you will have a ſence of the Godly Care and Concern, which the Lord hath raiſed in the Minds of ſome of his faithful Elders, for the Good and Preſervation of his Heritage But if there be any amongſt our ſelves, or others not acquainted with our Chriſtian Diſcipline, (who for want of truly ſeeing the great danger and hurt, that hath attended the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, by unbounded deſires, and perſuit after the things of this World;) ſhall cenſure our Chriſtian care, as if we went about to exerciſe Lordſhip over one another, or would hinder, and limet ſuch Induſtrous and capable perſons, who in the fear of God, and in Moderation, do improve the Creation in general, or their own worldly Talents in particular, which God hath been pleas'd to give them. I ſay if any ſhall thus Judg of our Godly Care and Endeavours, Let all ſuch know they are miſtaken, and that no ſuch thing is intended.

But as a People, whom the Lord hath made ſenſible, of the many ſnares that do attend, and the Loſs ſome have ſuſteined, by the unſatiable Deſire,

and too Eager Perſuit after the Lawful things of this World; A concern came upon us, that if poſſible we might all come to be limited, with truths bounds that leads to Moderation and Content; and to depend more upon that providential hand of the Lord, that will afford us, what we ſtand in Need of, then in an Inordinate deſire to perſue after the gain of this Worlds Goods.

And now dear Friends and Brethren, this Brotherly Caution ariſes in my Heart to you, who were Eye-Witneſſes and partakers of that wonderful and Eminent bowing power and preſence of the Lord God, that appeared amongſt us at that Meeting, that none who were Witneſſes, of the Power of the Lord at that time, and thereby brought into a lively ſence and ſight of the great danger, attending that mind which would be going after Covetouſneſs, may in the leaſt give way thereto, or enter into Reaſoning and Conſulting with Fleſh and Blood, by which you will looſe the ſence you then had of that Spirit, and be in danger of becoming Monuments of God's Diſpleaſure. But on the contrary keep to the guidance and direction of Gods Spirit in your ſelves; which will limit your deſires (to the lawful things of this World) within the bounds of Truth, which is the earneſt deſire of one that deſires the good and preſervation of all in that which will tend to the glory of God, & bring everlaſting comfort in the end.

Thomas Trafford.

To

To all our dear Friends and Brethren in this Nation of *Ireland*, and elſewhere.

THE Salutation of our dear love in the Lord JESUS CHRIST in tender Bowels, flows forth to the whole Heritage of God with fervent deſires, that all may walk worthy of his great love and Fatherly kindneſs and care to us, and over us, who hath bleſſed us in turning us from our Iniquities, and brought us to the knowledge of himſelf, by the bleſſed light of his dear Son ſhining in our hearts, and by the evidence of his holy Spirit confirmed our faith in the great unſpeakable benefit we have, both in his firſt and ſecond coming for to ſuffer for us, in that prepared Body,

and now in Spirit and glorious power of the Father, to perfect our Redemption and Salvation, and to reconcile us unto himself by washing us with the Water of Regeneration, & sprinkling us with the Blood of his covenant and under his daily Cross, which crucifies us to the World, and renews his heavenly Image in us, and hath preserved us in all Exercises of Troubles, Temptations, and Perils of all sorts, inward and outward, and fed us plentifully with the wholesom and sound doctrine of his heavenly Kingdom, and watered us abundantly from time to time with the Distillations of the Showers thereof flowing from the Clouds; that he hath prepared and filled with his holy Spirit to replenish his Husbandry and Vineyard with the Mysteries of Faith and Godliness, as the former Rain in its season, and the latter Rain in its season; and clothed us with Religious Discipline, and Gospel Order, that no nakedness may be amongst us, but every Member of this Body

Body of people which Chriſt is Head of may be covered with his Righteouſneſs in Words and Actions, following him in the daily Croſs and ſelf denial by Faith in him, as Lights in the World to the praiſe and glory of God; and in order to carry on and perfect this good Work for our Eſtabliſhment and his Honour, He hath raiſed and ſettled, and is raiſing Inſtruments according to his bleſſed promiſe that he would give his People Judges as at firſt, and Counſellers as at the beginning: Men fearing God and hating Covetouſneſs, gifting them for this great Work with his holy Spirit of Counſel with a ſound Mind and Underſtanding, and a concern for his Honour, and proſperity of his bleſſed Truth amongſt Men; the Enlargement and Exalting of the Government and Kingdom of Chriſt with all Godly diligence, according to the ability and gift of his holy Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding given to them for this work and ſervice for the Lord and his People, as help-meets in Go-

Government, and Overſeers and Door-keepers of the Flock and Church of Chriſt, walking before them as good Examples in ſelf-denial and daily Croſs of Chriſt, not only to the unlawful things of the World, but to the lawful things; The Lord bounding them in their getting, and ordering them in their Management, and diſpoſing thereof that the Flock may follow by their footſteps as they thus follow Chriſt.

And dear Friends, You of this Nation knows that for ſeveral Years paſt there hath been, and yet remains, a Godly care on the minds and ſpirits of ſuch whom the Lord hath thus raiſed and concerned as Overſeers; that all things might be well in the Church of Chriſt, and he may preſent it to the Father as a Chaſte Virgin, without blemiſh; and on this Account much labour of ~~God~~ love hath been beſtowed at Opportunities and Seaſons, which the Lord hath put into our hands, and hath been ſanctified to us, the Lord owning his

his work and us in it, and honouring our Aſſemblies in this ſervice with his powerful glorious preſence to the overcoming of our hearts with comfort and ſatisfaction, opening our Underſtandings by the Enlargement of his holy Spirit, in many things abſolutely needful to be put in practice for the preſervation of his People, out of the ſnares of the Enemy of Mankind, which he lays in the World and baits them with the things of this World. And God hath wonderfully own'd and bleſſed our labours to our great Comfort and Encouragment, and the great benefit and ſatisfaction of many who gives thanks and praiſes to the Lord for the benefit received, on many Accounts through thoſe cloſe Concerns and Labours of love for the good of one another, as Saviours on *Mount Sion.*

And now that which remains and chiefly is before us in this ſervice of this our day, is to warn and admoniſh the Church of Chriſt to beware of the ſnares of that unwearied Enemy which

which he lays in ſecret, & baits with the lawful things of this World in this time of Eaſe and great Liberty; for his baits is ſuitable to the times and ſeaſons to anſwer the Inclination of Peoples minds that goes from things that are above, after the things that are below; and 'tis eaſie to underſtand the generality of People is taken in his ſnares and carried away after *Riches*, *Preferment*, *Honour*, *Greatneſs*, and *Vain-Glory* in the things of this World that is uncertain, and ſoon comes to an End: And he is ſtriving to break in upon the People of our Society whom the Lord hath called by his Grace out of the World, to obey and follow him in all things as Lights in the World to his Honour. And this Enemy of all Righteouſneſs hath prevailed on many, that are not ſo careful and watchful in the Light of Chriſt as they ought to be, againſt this Adverſary of Mankind, in the lawful things of this World, with which he blinds the Eyes of the Underſtanding, and leads the Heart, Mind

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and Affections into Captivity, they not Eying the Lord and his bleſſed Truth to limit and bound them, ſo falls into many Temptations, Snares, and hurtful Luſts; and others following their Examples to get Riches, and be big in the World, Invades other Mens Properties, and fails in their purpoſes, ſo ſacrifices Religion and their own Credit to their greedy deſire after gain, and gives occaſion for Men to brand us with the Character of Covetouſneſs, which cauſes Truth profeſſed by us to be evil ſpoken of; Stumbles the minds of ſome that otherwiſe might joyn with us, and hinders the Lords work of Reformation on many Accounts, and grieves his good Spirit, and wounds the hearts of his faithful Servants, that are given up in Heart, Mind, Body, and Subſtance, that the Lord may limit, bound, order and diſpoſe of them & all they have, and hold as ſtewards under him; that hath all power in Heaven and Earth: and his Will and Mind to be known and obſerved in Earthly things

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as well as in heavenly things, with all due Reverence, Subjection, and Obedience, where our preſervation is from the Inrodes the Enemy makes to hinder the Progreſs of the Lords People, and to make them unfruitful to the Lord as his Vineyard, in heavenly and ſpiritual things; but inſtead thereof to bring forth wild Grapes, Bryars, Thorns, Thiſtles, and Tares, the fruits of the Mind, Heart, Spirit, and Affections that goes in their own Wills into Earthly things, beyond the Bounds and Limits of the Lords Everlaſting Truth, which is great provocations for the Lord to curſe the Ground, and to lay his Vineyard waſte which he hath beſtowed great labour upon, that it might bring forth good fruit to the Praiſe, Honour, and Glory of his great Name.

Now under a due conſideration of the great Injury and damage the Church of Chriſt hath and doth ſuſtain in our day by this floating Spirit that leads into the lawful things of the World,

World, beyond the Bounds of Truth, and beyond the uſe for which they were created and given of God. A great concern came upon ſeveral of us in a ſpiritual Travel for the Honour of God and the preſervation of his People, the Comlineſs, Beauty, and Credit of the unſpotted Religion profeſſed by us, and under this Godly care and concern the Spirit and power of the Lord mightily appearing with us, and in us, in which the Teſtimony of the Lord Jeſus roſe in many as a Standard lifted up againſt the Invaſions of an Enemy, and great Labours and Endeavours were uſed to ſtop this unſatiable Mind and Spirit that is ſo earneſt and eager after Earthly things, and yet not willing to be called by the name of Covetouſneſs, and to bring it within the Bounds and Limits of Truth. This Religious concern being practiſed from time to time for ſeveral Years, at ſuch Opportunities as the Lord put into our hands to be concerned in Church-Affairs, that nothing

thing might get in nor grow which God hath not ſowed nor planted, but be pluckt up and rooted out in due time; that the Lords Plant and good Seed that he hath planted and ſowed, might grow, flouriſh, and bring forth good fruits in due Seaſon, to the Honour and Glory of the great Husbandman, that the cares of this World and Covetouſneſs of Riches might not choak it.

Now we being at our Province Meeting, before mentioned, and a great Appearance of Friends both Men and Women, and the mighty power of the Lord amongſt us, his Glory covering our Aſſembly, and crowning our meeting with his preſence, and under a weighty ſence thereof the Affairs of the Church were managed in great Unity, Peace, and Concord; And under this heavenly Canopy of the Lords Antient goodneſs a weighty concern came upon our Spirits, as at other times on the like Occaſion, concerning the Bounds and Limits of Getting, and

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the right using the lawful things of this World; and how far Friends might safely go into them. And much time being spent in Church-Affairs to good purpose and satisfaction the Meeting adjourned till the next day, and after the Meeting for the worship of God was over, then Men, Friends, and Antient concerned Women, to meet together, and consider of this weighty matter; and accordingly Friends met and sat down in great Silence, retired to the Lord for his Aid and Counsel, and the Lord was pleased to appear, and his power was great through his Spirit to our great Comfort, for his Glory covered our Assembly, and many hearts were melted before him, because of the weight of his Goodness, which bowed all Spirits, and many heavenly things were opened in the Testimony of Jesus concerning the Bounds and right use of the lawful things of this World, and in the demonstration of the Spirit and power of

Chriſt then abounding amongſt us, and governing our Aſſembly, and guiding our hearts and underſtandings. Unanimouſly it was agreed and adjudged that a Competence of the lawful things of this World is ſufficient for every one, and is the right bounds with a due conſideration of every ones Charge, Station, place and ſervice. And that Mind which will not be content with this bears the Character of Covetouſneſs, and renders ſuch unfit to Rule in the Church of Chriſt; And under the Over-Ruling power of the Lord there was an Unanimous Conſent, one by one, to offer up our ſelves to the Judgment of the Province-Meeting, or other approved Elders, as the Province-Meeting ſhall think fit, if in any thing we do exceed thoſe Bounds, that Truth may bound Us that hath all power in Heaven and Earth: And in a Subjection one to another in our Poſſeſſions, Holdings, Callings, Trading and dealing amongſt Men, not to be our own

Judges,

Judges, or walk in the light of our own Eyes, conſidering the Wiſe Mans ſaying, *That every Mans Cauſe is good in his own Eyes, but his Neighbour finds him out, and in the multitude of Counſel is ſafety.* Not that we intend to deprive any, of the moderate & lawful uſe of the things of this World, or to take from any Man his Poſſeſſions, or to invade and take away Property, but to bring all things into right bounds, and ſet them in their right places, that ſo none may be guilty of the great ſin of abuſing the Lord's Mercies, but might uſe and enjoy them to his honour; that in ſo doing they may enjoy his Peace & Bleſſing, which indeed is the true comfort of all Enjoyments. Thus ſhall we give evident Teſtimony to the World by our Moderation, even in the lawful things, that we are true followers of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in a ſelf-denying life. And thus, as helps meet together in the Lord Jeſus, we may be as Saviours on *Mount Sion*, building up one another in our

moſt precious Faith, and in our heavenly poſſeſſion in Chriſt Jeſus, over the greedy Gain, Greatneſs, and Vain-Glory of the World, and periſhing fading things thereof that ſoon comes to an End; and here the rich Man will not Glory in his Riches, but ſee the danger of them, and not lay hold of Opportunities to heap up more, to make himſelf and poſterity great in the World, but rather Endeavour to leſſen, that with more eaſe and chearfulneſs he may ſerve God and his Generation with what he hath, with all his might, being glad of every Opportunity that preſents, that he may do good and be rich in good Works, conſidering he is a Steward, and his time uncertain in what he enjoys, and muſt be accountable to the Lord of all, for all things he poſſeſſes under him; and under the like conſideration the mean Man will be glad that he is free from many Temptations and Snares that the Rich in this World is lyable to fall into, (and pierce them

themſelves with many ſorrows and hurtful Luſts,) and bleſs the Lord for what he enjoys, not wanting Food and Rayment with which he is well content and eaſie in his mind, that is towards the Lord, and ſeeks not from place to place, and from one Country to another in a covetous Mind to heap up Riches, but looks to the Lord with an Eye of Faith, to receive Counſel from him in his undertakings, and dare not go beyond his Limits, nor without his countenance; and all Murmuring, Repining, and Unbelief is kept out of the Camp. And there will be no craving Spirits where the Lord Rules, but all in their ſtations according to their Ability and Gifts endeavour to ſerve the Lord with all their might and Subſtance in their places where the Lord hath raiſed them, or order'd them, and may be ſerviceable; Shaking themſelves from the duſt of the Earth, putting on their beautiful Garments of the Lords Government, and ſhining under the diſcipline thereof, riſing over the

Earth and Earthly things in the life and power of Chriſt, as Lights in the World in this glorious day of the Lord, wherein he is ſtaining the Glory of the lawful things of this World, and the goodlineſs thereof by the brightneſs of his coming in the Glory of his Fathers Kingdom; and is whipping Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, that it may be a houſe for the ſervice of God, which holineſs becomes; that he may walk, ſup, and make his abode, and the Offerings of his People may be acceptable to him when he hath purged away all this droſs, Tin and reprobate Silver.

Our hearts are deeply affected with the care and kindneſs of the Lord for our preſervation from the Snares of the Enemy, which he lays for us in the lawful things of this World, far more dangerous, and we more lyable to be taken in them in this time of great eaſe and liberty, than in the time of perſecution and ſufferings, to be frighted from our ſtedfaſtneſs in our Faith and Principles.

And dear Friends, we may well underſtand that as to our Society, ſelf-denial ſtands moſtly in the lawful things, hoping by this time of this glorious day you have overcome the baſe and unlawful things, and your hearts and minds is cleanſed from them by the Blood of Chriſt that ſprinkles our hearts from an evil Conſcience, and waſhes our Bodies with clean Water of Regeneration, and renewing of his Holy Spirit. And he that hath done this for us is perfecting what is lacking, that he may preſent us to God the Father faultleſs, to whom be praiſes for ever. *Amen.*

Subſcribed in behalf of the Meeting by

William Edmondſon.
Thomas Trafford.
Roger Roberts.
John Pim.
George Rooke.
Thomas Wilſon.

POST-SCRIPT.

AT the firſt when the Lord called and gathered us to be a People, and opened the Eyes of our Underſtandings, then we ſaw the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, and the wickedneſs that was in the World; and a perfect Abhorrence was fixed in our hearts againſt all the wicked, unjuſt, vain, ungodly, unlawful part of the World in all Reſpects; And we ſaw the goodly and moſt glorious lawful things of the World to be abuſed and miſuſed: And that many Snares and Temptations laid in them, and many troubles and dangers of divers kinds, and we felt the Load of them, and that we could not carry them and run the Race the Lord had ſet before us ſo chearful as to win the Prize of our Salvation; So that our care was to caſt off this great Load

Load and Burthen of our great and gainful ways of getting Riches, and to leſſen our concerns therein, to the Compaſs that we might not be chargeable to any in our ſtations and ſervices required of us, and be ready to anſwer Chriſt Jeſus our Captain that called us to follow him in a ſpiritual warfare, under the diſcipline of his daily Croſs and ſelf-denial; and then the things of this World was of ſmall value with us; So that we might win Chriſt, and the goodlieſt things of the World was not near us; So that we might be near the Lord, and the Lords Truth outballanc'd all the World, even the moſt glorious part of it. Then great Trading was a Burthen, and great concerns a great trouble, all needleſs things, fine Houſes, rich Furniture, and gaudy Apparel, was an Eye ſore; Our Eye being ſingle to the Lord, and the inſhining of his Light in our hearts, which gave us the ſight of the knowledge of the Glory of God, which ſo affected our minds, that it

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ſtained the Glory of all Earthly things, and they bore no Maſtery with us either in dwelling, eating, drinking, buying, ſelling, marrying, or giving in marriage; the Lord was the object of our Eye, and we all humble and low before him and ſelf of ſmall Repute; Miniſters and Elders in all ſuch caſes walking as good Examples, that the flock might follow their footſteps as they followed Chriſt in the daily Croſs and ſelf-denial in their dwellings, callings, eating, drinking, buying, ſelling, marrying, and giving in marriage; And this anſwered the Lord and his Witneſs in all Conſciences, and gave us great credit amongſt Men.

And as our Number increaſed, it happened that ſuch a Spirit came in amongſt us, as was amongſt the Jews, when they came out of *Egypt*, and this began to look back into the World, and traded with the Credit which was not of its own purchaſing

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and ſtriving to be great in the Riches and Poſſeſſions of this World, and then great fair buildings in City and Country, fine and faſhionable Furniture, and apparel equivolent, with dainty and voluptuous proviſion, with Rich Matches in Marriage, with Exceſſive Cuſtomary, uncomely ſmoaking of Tobacco, under colour of lawful and ſerviceable, far wide from the Footſteps of the Miniſters and Elders the Lord raiſed and ſent forth into his Work and ſervice at the beginning; And far ſhort of the Example our Lord and Maſter Chriſt Jeſus left us, when he was tempted in the Wilderneſs with the preference of the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, and deſpiſed them. And Moſes that refuſed the Crown of *Egypt*, and to be called the Son of *Pharoh*'s Daughter, rather chuſed Affliction with the Lords People, having a regard to the recompence of reward. And the holy Apoſtle writes to the Church of Chriſt both Fathers, Young-

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men and Children, and adviſes a-gainſt the love of the World, and the faſhions thereof: And it is working as the old Leaven at this very time, to corrupt the Heritage of God, and to fill it with Bryars, Thorns, Thiſtles, and Tares, and the Grapes of the Earth to make the Lord reject it, and lay it waſt. But the Lord of all our mercies, whoſe Eye hath been over us for good ſince he gathered us to be a People, and entred into Covenant with us, and according to his antient promiſe is lifting up his Spirit as a Standard againſt the Invaſion of this Enemy, and is raiſing up his living Word and Teſtimony in the hearts of many, to ſtand in the Gap which this floating high worldly libertine Spirit hath made; And that is gone from the Footſteps of them that follows Chriſt as at firſt, and knows him to bound them, and to keep in his Bounds: and not in their own Will, and time lay hold on Preſentations and Opportunities that may offer

offer to get Riches, which many hath had and refuſed for Truths ſake, and the Lord hath accepted as an offering, and rewarded to their great comfort, and to the Praiſe of his great Name.

William Edmondſon.

The End.